

T-1

AIRGRAM

DEF 19 US Thai

RS/R 1	REP	AF	ARA
EUR	FE	NEA	CU
INR 6	E	P	IO
L	FBO	AID	
	PM 2	15	
AGR	COM	FRB	INT
LAB	TAR	TR	XMB
AIR 5	ARMY 3	NAVY 7	OSD 34
USIA	NSA 3	CIA 16	NSC 6

Original to be Filed in \_\_\_\_\_ Decentralized Files.

FILE DESIGNATION

~~SECRET/NOFORN~~

XX A-375

HANDLING INDICATOR

NO.

TO : Department of State  
 INFO : Department of Defense:ISA, CINCPAC,  
 MACHTAI, Defense Intelligence Agency  
 SEP 26 10 53 AM '72  
 Thailand/Political/Blue/Love

FROM : AmEmbassy BANGKOK  
 DATE: Sept 22, 1972

SUBJECT : INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT OF SECURITY ASSISTANCE --  
 THAILAND FY74-78, PART III: Analysis of MAP

REF :  
 A. Bangkok 12368 (August 31, 1972)  
 B. State 081653 (May 11, 1972)  
 C. State 23035Z (December 24, 1971)

(Introductory Note: This is the third of a series of five airgrams assessing US security assistance to Thailand FY74-78. Reference A is a telegram summarizing all five airgrams.)

SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION

Thailand, a friend and ally of the US for two decades, is confronted with the growing threat posed by a Communist-led insurgency and with the critical economic and social development needs of a rapidly expanding and largely rural population. By absolute standards, Thailand is a poor country (\$190 annual average per capita income) and there is strong competition among the elements of the Royal Thai Government (RTG) for budget resources to meet the pressing security and development needs.

For 22 years, US security assistance (FY51-72 value \$1.5 billion -- \$1 billion military assistance and \$500,000,000/economic assistance) has assisted the Thais to meet many of their needs. The RTG has accomplished much with US help to date; but as Thailand's internal

COPY FLO-PBR

1972 SEP 26 AM 11 04

POST ROUTING			
TO:	Action	Info.	Initials
AMB/PO			
DCM			
POL			
ECON			
CONS			
ADM			
AID			
USIS			
FILE			

Action Taken:

Date:

Initials:

FORM 10-64 DS-323

~~SECRET/NOFORN~~

For Department Use Only

☐ In ☐ Out

Drafted by:

Drafting Date:

Phone No.:

Contents and Classification Approved by:

POMIL:FBCorrey

14 Sep 72

339

The Ambassador

Clearance:

POMIL:HDJones

ECON:Mr. Schodt

POL:Mr. Pickering

DCM:Mr. Masters

D/S:Mr. Stokes

MACT:CofS DAO

SA:Mr. Reagan

USOM:Mr. Simmons

25X1

SECRET/NOFORN

Bangkok A-375

2.

security situation deteriorated, new needs -- largely in the counterinsurgency (CI) area -- appeared which must compete for resources with certain older, continuing projects.

The present circumstances involving the transfer of US military assistance from Department of Defense service funding to MAP funding under the Foreign Assistance Act and the new requirement for an integrated assessment of planned US security assistance to Thailand in FY 1974 offer an opportunity to take stock of continuing and planned programs.

Thailand probably will have to devote additional resources to counterinsurgency and her development needs will continue to demand extensive budget outlays. Yet there are ample indications that US Congressional budget cuts may force a reduction of US military assistance to Thailand. This could well place further strains on the Thai budget and stimulate further competition for budget resources. Severe budget cuts might also adversely affect continued RTG cooperation with the US in resisting North Vietnamese aggression in the Indo-China War.

The US has used Thai air bases and other facilities in Thailand to support the Vietnam War. Access to these bases is now critically important as US forces phase out of Vietnam. For example, about two-thirds of all combat air strikes flown by US aircraft in the Indochina theater originate in Thailand.

Aware of these political realities and conscious of the limits on RTG budget resources, the Mission seeks to develop a security assistance program which -- to the maximum degree possible -- is relevant to present and readily predictable Thai security needs and yet which makes economic sense for a poor Asian country.

ILLEGIB

SECRET/NOFORN

SECRET

Bangkok A-<sup>375</sup>

21.

developing river surveillance systems to check infiltration. At this time ARPA acknowledged that very little was known about enemy river crossing activity. Ironically, when another ARPA-commissioned study of insurgency itself was published in 1970 (Research and Analysis Corporation, Insurgency and Counter-insurgency in Thailand, 1970) it clearly indicated that the insurgents in the Northeast were not/<sup>heavily</sup> dependent upon materiel support from Laos.

(ii) Behavior Patterns of the River Population. The comparatively few insurgent infiltrators who do enter Thailand from Laos across the Mekong and arms smugglers move with the normal civilian river traffic; and RTG efforts to check the traffic have been made very difficult because the people who live along both sides of the river travel freely back and forth across the river and refuse to comply with RTG regulations concerning their use of the river.

The SRI/ARPA report on the Mekong River Surveillance Study (dated 1969) noted that small numbers of infiltrators (rather than supplies) would be the most likely prime target for the MROU in the present or near future, as the expected flow of supplies across the Mekong to the insurgents in the Northeast was not expected to be great. The study opined that infiltration would move among the normal traffic of innocent boat traffic and that supplies would move through smuggling chains which operate in the same medium. Thus, the SRI researchers concluded that insurgent traffic would be difficult to identify and that a system to screen all (normal civilian) river traffic on the entire length of the Mekong River that comprises the border between Thailand and Laos (approximately 850 Kms or 500 miles) would be very difficult to establish and would probably create political problems more serious than the problems it was seeking to solve.

Information gathered since the publication of the ARPA study indicates that the pattern of smuggling and infiltration activity remains substantially the same to date.

Recently (as predicted by the SRI study), Royal Thai Navy officers of the MROU stated that they had encountered great difficulty in checking routine civilian boat traffic along and across the Mekong, because of the river population's reluctance to cross the river only at specific checkpoints, and because fishermen ignore curfew restrictions and the requirement to carry ID cards.

SECRET

Furthermore, it seems likely that insurgent logisticians and other smugglers should be able to circumvent even greatly expanded MROU interdiction operations with comparative ease. Smuggler and infiltrator performance to date indicates that they have managed to avoid the patrols to date.

The MROU's interdiction performance in these circumstances would not be greatly improved by doubling the present number of boats. Conversely, were the MROU not to receive the boats in the FY74 plan its interdiction effectiveness would not be reduced. Current assets and those already in the pipeline will give the MROU a substantial presence on the Mekong and enable the combined RTG riverine forces to patrol the river in the areas of most likely infiltration and to conduct other current activities: showing the flag, performing civic action, collecting river-crossing traffic data, and conducting improved anti-smuggling operations.

(iii) Back Up Force Never Created. The original Mekong River Surveillance System concept, it should be pointed out, called for the creation of a back-up ground patrol force which would add depth to the interdiction effort. The RTG never established such a force in the form called for by the project recommendations.

(b) COMUSMACTHAI Position

The MROU is the only operational entity in the RTN with a mission directly related to counterinsurgency. Although still very much in the growing stage, the MROU has provided a creditable RTG presence for the first time in various sections of the Mekong River frontier between the Kingdoms of Laos and Thailand. In a limited time of operations, the MROU has gained the confidence and trust of RTG citizens on and along the Mekong with whom they have come in contact, which may be due to the RTN sailors interest and the personal integrity of the command. The lack of significant detection of large scale arms infiltration in their patrol areas may, in fact, be due to the deterrent effect of the boats presence, thus forcing the majority of clandestine materials through already known overland routes. It is the strongest recommendation of the Navy Advisory Group that the Mekong River Operating Unit be completed as planned. This will increase the already proven effective surveillance network for the full 850 km length of the Mekong River, as this program is only starting to pay its full potential dividend for the security of Thailand.